836 pure until her marriage," said Dr. Vermale elsewhere. "Those are sentiments which the Tuareg do not understand. Thus, as soon as she is nubile, she goes to the ohal and it is not long before she is deflowered. Virginity does not exist and has no representative value in the eyes of the Tuareg." (2) Indeed, the women are

2. Op. cit., p. 171.

more or less easy. Some give themselves to the first comer; others grant their favors to only a small group of friends. To grant them [839 577] only to a single person, however, would be judged in very bad taste and a sign of perversion.

[554] No one finds fault with their free mores, on the condition that they let themselves be courted only by men of a social condition equal to their own. Some women let themselves be courted by slaves and that is considered a shame for them.

842 /290/ One may be astonished that unwed mothers are not more numerous with such dissolute mores. Contraception is com- [833] monly used, and, as Dr. Foley said, effusio seminis inter crura is probably the frequent conclusion of the nocturnal rendezvous after the ahal. (1) These restrictive measures must not be unre-

1. Moeurs et médecine des Touaregs de l'Ahaggar /Ahaggar Tuareg Mores and Medicine/, p. 56.

lated to the low birth rate of the Tuareg, and it is quite possible that the married Tuareg woman continues to practice them.

847 Bearing children out of wedlock and bastardy (agama) are the [848] object of public discredit. The Tuareg rarely practice abortion, but infanticides used to be quite numerous, and no one thought of being offended by them. When a woman finds herself pregnant

847 under these circumstances, she usually goes to visit a relative and tries to hide her pregnancy. No one is taken in, but nobody says
[754] anything. She goes to see a marabout who, for a rather high price, makes a few mysterious signs before the sinner, writes a few words in Arabic on a small board, washes the writing, and gathers the water in a gourd for the woman to drink. In case these practices are successful (?), a second sum identical to the first one is paid.
[278] If not, the woman tries several mixtures, generally with a base of adjerdjir (Cassia abavata), and in case the results are still negative, the baby is simply strangled when it comes into the world. Al-
[797] though these mores are still more or less in force, they seem some-
848] what reduced by Islamization, and unnatural mothers are sometimes punished severely.

174 The ahal seems to have existed in ancient North African Libyan tribes. Herodotus mentioned the community of women among the Nasamonians, and the ahal is, in fact, only a derived and evolved form of it, if one could call it evolved.

582 Marriage. -- With the existence of such easy mores, it is understandable that young men and women do not care to marry early. Women rarely marry before the age of twenty, and men, before thirty.

584 Although the girl is free with her body, as we have seen, she
[593] still needs her father's authorization to marry. On the other hand, however, it is rare for a husband to be imposed on her or for her to be married before puberty, as is the custom among the Arabs.

/291/ Mates are chosen in the lovers' meetings which form a sort of trial marriage. The suitor must ask the young girl's father through one of his parents or through a religious person if there is one in the region.

[184] Among the Ihaggaren everyone is informed of the suit, but in Air this is not the case; there the mother and the family of
[587] the girl are informed only when everything is arranged. If the woman has already been married, her father's permission is no longer necessary.

161 /108 cont./ cited above. The birth rate is not very high, but it is greater than the low death rate. Infant mortality is practically impossible to verify.

162 In 1948 there were 1, 028 men counted for 1, 202 women, which would seem tosupport the widespread opinion that relative to other peoples there are more men than women among the Tuareg. One must be careful, however, not to make this type of affirmation without having previously examined all the causes that may produce such a state of affairs. It is almost certain that the Tuareg control their birth rate. The 162 chief of the tribe may forbid births or may recommend them 847 according to the number of members of the tribe. This measure seems wise in a country which can scarcely support the existing population. The situation is such as it would be if the Tuareg had found, empirically, the ideal number of individuals able to be supported by their soil and were wise enough to try to maintain this number.

The men interrogated on this subject avoided the question, saying that this concerns their women and that they do not know the methods employed. The women are equally reticent, not to say mute.

/109/ Some of them claim to abort by drinking decoctions of plants. The French doctors know the qualities of these plants and think that this medication would be insufficient to produce the desired effect. By being patient, I was able to learn a method which, although dangerous, should be effective; I got this information from only one woman and have never been able to confirm it, as it is difficult to touch on these subjects directly. The women supposedly use a probe that they make from a "stone" called "azarif" ("cheb" in Arabic), which is of alum; they make this the size of a slate pencil. 162 This probe dissolves after having produced a mechanical effect. 165 It is likely that many women fall victim to these maneuvers, 847 for in questioning the Tuareg one discovers a rather high female mortality rate at a relatively young age. Perhaps we may see

/109 cont./ here the cause of the greater proportion of men to women.

The most widespread disease in the Ahaggar is undoubtedly malaria, most often contracted in Sudanese territory and spread in the Ahaggar, where anopheles are numerous in the agricultural centers and at all the permanent or temporary water points. Professor Rémy of the faculty at Nancy has found them in the Tarahouaout tiggert /outflow of water/, at the In-Ezzebib guelta /pool/; the doctor, Captain Galan, has collected them in the Afilal guelta at an altitude of nearly 2, 000 meters.

Pneumonia and its pulmonary complications wreak the most havoc among the Tuareg; this is due to the winter cold, which is ill borne in too thin clothes.

[131] In 1949 an epidemic of measles took on the aspect of a catastrophe through its pulmonary consequences.

Venereal diseases are very common among the harratin, rarer among the Tuareg.

A distressing disease of the agricultural centers is trachoma, aggravated by every type of conjunctivitis transmitted by the flies that swarm and cluster around the /110/ eyes of children. The Tuareg seem immune to diseases of the eyes; they rarely have trachoma.

Smallpox, once so common and so feared, has practically disappeared, thanks to systematic vaccination. It was an unusual event to see two Tuareg return from the Sudan in April, 1951 covered with smallpox eruptions.

Tuberculosis does not seem to have appeared; skin tests made at the Tamanrasset school are negative for children born in the Ahaggar. There seems to be no manifestation of cancer.

Although the Tuareg are abundantly provided with lice, above all in the winter, as are the harratin, a case of typhus has never been known. Typhoid is unknown, as are diphtheria, tetanus, and poliomyelitis.